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Remembering the Past in Diasporic Spaces: Kurdish Reflections on Genocide Memorialization for Anfal

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Diasporas engage in a variety of practices and activities to commemorate past massacres and genocides that might have led to the formation of the diaspora in the first place. In this process, certain massacres can be constructed as the “chosen trauma” and consequently become a central element in commemoration practices and identity formation. In this paper, we discuss genocide memorialization in the context of the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora in Europe. We focus specifically on genocide memorialization of the Anfal Campaign (1986–1989) that was orchestrated by Saddam Hussein’s regime against the Kurdish population in Northern Iraq. We examine how collective remembering for Anfal takes place in the diasporic space, what diasporic articulations and representations of Anfal as the chosen trauma are produced in commemoration practices and how these genocide memorialization processes differ from those in the homeland context. How do Kurdish diaspora communities in Europe commemorate Anfal? How do diaspora narratives relate to collective memory and identity? What spatial and generational dynamics are at play in these processes?

Key words: Anfal, diaspora, genocide, identity, Kurdish, memory

In this paper, we focus on genocide memorialization in the context of the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora in Europe. We examine commemoration practices undertaken by diaspora Kurds to remember the Anfal Campaign² (1986–1989) and Halabja chemical attack (1988), which were orchestrated by Saddam Hussein’s regime against the Kurdish population in Northern Iraq. Some studies have discussed these atrocities from the perspective of the victims and survivors,³ while others have examined their impact on the national narratives and nation-state building processes in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)⁴ with a focus on acts of remembrance in the region.⁵ However, to our knowledge, in the field of Kurdish Studies no systematic study has focused on how Anfal is commemorated in the diaspora, not only by survivors but also more generally by first and second generation diaspora Kurds themselves, and how the commemorations differ from those in the homeland. By examining the spatial and generational dynamics of genocide memorialization, this paper offers an understanding of how the politics of memory and identity play out in the diasporic context.

Previous literature suggests that a shared memory is one of the defining features of diasporas that “retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements.”⁶ Although the centrality of the homeland in such classical understandings of diasporas has been revised in recent years, the relationship between diaspora and collective memory has received little interest from scholars so far, except a few studies that suggest that memory rather than territory can emerge as a competing element for diasporic identity.⁷ This relationship is particularly salient in cases where the diaspora has emerged as a result of a conflict or an existential threat to the community in the homeland, such as genocide. Mlodoč argues that “traumatic experiences have an especially strong impact on memory”, and if the experience of violence is shared by a group of people it can become a “collective trauma.”⁸ Collective traumas, such as genocides, can also become

“chosen traumas,”⁹ as many communities around the world, who are subjected to elevated degrees of violence, organize commemoration events that selectively reference certain past acts of violence and possibly omit others. Indeed, the commemoration practices of past massacres have been said to turn the diaspora space into a “multidirectional landscape of memory.”¹⁰

In terms of the politics of memory, this not only means that some massacres or genocides can become the chosen trauma in diasporic articulations and representations on genocide, but that they can also be referenced by different actors for a variety of political or other ends. Diasporas originating from conflict-induced migration rarely cut their ties to the homeland after traumatic experiences such as genocide. Instead they mobilize around the traumatic event, form solidarity networks to commemorate it, and rally against forgetting past experiences by sharing the memory with subsequent generations. In the long run, the chosen trauma can turn into a central component of national narratives and is adopted by state elites or employed by political actors, many of whom are diaspora returnees themselves, to mobilize the diaspora for political or other ends.¹¹ Commemoration practices concerning genocide memorialization and the potential tensions surrounding them can also play out differently in the diasporic space than in the homeland.

In the diasporic context, memories of displacement and exile can become intertwined with those of the chosen trauma, and genocide memorialization can provide a sense of belonging to a diaspora community through this shared traumatic past. This is the case, for example, with the Armenian diaspora for whom genocidal memory has become significant in establishing a cohesive group ideology within the diaspora.¹² Commemoration practices not only draw from the memory of past events (and selectively so), but can also become a way to communicate a sense of identity to subsequent generations. However, born and raised in their

parents' host societies, the next generation has not experienced the chosen trauma themselves, and therefore their relationship to it can differ from that of their parents' generation.

In this paper, building on the previous work on Anfal as the chosen trauma,¹³ we ask: How are the commemoration practices by the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora in Europe organized? What diasporic articulations and representations of Anfal do they entail, and how do they relate to collective memory and identity? What spatial and generational dynamics are at play in these processes?

Commemorations of Anfal have become central to the Kurdish nation-building project in the KRI and are a touchstone in Kurdish collective memory: they even lie at the heart of the current official Kurdish national identity put forward by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG).¹⁴ Our analysis suggests that the Anfal Campaign also constitutes a chosen trauma for the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora. However, tensions stemming from local versus state-led genocide memorialization in the KRI are not fully diffused to the diaspora. Instead, diasporic commemoration practices usually concern recognition and performances of cohesion, unity, and solidarity, which have become an element of diasporic identity construction. The exile resulting from the Campaign is at the heart of the foundation of the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora in Europe, and Anfal has not only become associated with the diasporic condition and the narrative of victimhood, but also increasingly with narratives of resilience and resistance. Whereas the first-generation members' articulations of Anfal draw from the lived experience of exile, victimhood, and oppression, for the second generation Anfal has become part of transmitted knowledge, a postmemory. Based on these empirical observations, we argue that an analysis of the spatial and generational dynamics of genocide

memorialization surrounding chosen traumas provides a better understanding of how the politics of memory and identity play out in the diasporic space.

Methods and Data Collection

The paper draws from a qualitative dataset that consists of semi-structured interviews with more than 100 first and second generation diaspora members and stakeholders who have engaged in genocide commemoration practices in Germany, Sweden, Finland, France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands between 2008 and 2018. Both authors conducted these interviews in the realm of their individual research projects during the last 10 years, allowing them to observe the trajectories of Iraqi Kurdish diaspora mobilization over the recognition of Anfal as genocide and how that relates to articulations of the Kurdish diasporic identity.¹⁵ Interviewees included diaspora organization leaders, ordinary members, public intellectuals, representatives of Iraqi Kurdish political parties abroad, Iraqi Kurdish politicians based in the homeland, and representatives of official KRG representations in Europe.¹⁶ Their educational backgrounds varied as both researchers aimed to capture general trends rather than elite behaviour towards genocide commemoration in the diaspora. Interviewees were, therefore, selected from all walks of life and their ages varied between 18 and 75.

The interviews were conducted following ethical guidelines and respecting the anonymity of the interviewees. Voice recordings and transcripts of interviews were anonymized and the names of interviewees were omitted unless they specifically asked to be named in this research. Most participants or their parents had originally migrated from the KRI, particularly since the late 1980s onward. Both researchers included participants who arrived in Europe with different conflict-induced migration waves before and after the Anfal Campaign. It is also essential to remember that the Kurdish diaspora is highly heterogeneous,

and not the least due to the division of Kurdish lands and populations across Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria. In this paper, we will focus on the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora, although some commemoration events also attracted diaspora Kurds from outside Iraqi Kurdistan.

Additional datasets includes visual and textual (online) material collected from diaspora events, social media platforms, and observation notes on Anfal-related commemoration events, diaspora meetings, and demonstrations that were organized in the countries of settlement. The collected data was analysed with content analysis.

On Remembering and Identity Across Diasporic Spaces and Generations

An increasing body of empirical literature has focused on genocide memorialization and how the related commemorative practices have become powerful tools for transitional justice, reconciliation, and political claims-making.¹⁷ However, remembering past atrocities has not always been adopted as a strategy to overcoming the traumas of the past. Various empirical case studies have also shown that communities can opt to “forget” in order to heal from the traumas they have experienced in inter-communal conflicts. For instance, authors like Susanne Buckley-Zistel argue that in the Rwandan case “chosen amnesia” was adopted as a strategy for local co-existence in a post-conflict environment.¹⁸ Whether or not these atrocities become part of collective memory and have an impact on national identity formation led by homeland actors varies from one case to another. Moreover, several groups might choose different strategies to either forget or remember past atrocities. Therefore, commemoration processes are never straightforward, and the politics of memory is usually at play as a result of competition between different elites or between state-led and grassroots initiatives that might have differing political aims.

Genocide memorialization is closely related to the question of recognition. Different diaspora groups across the globe have mobilized and taken part in political and other activities that aim to acknowledge a particular massacre or set of massacres.¹⁹ Such initiatives have consisted of diaspora actors doing advocacy work and lobbying host society policy makers, but also organizing commemoration events in the host society and targeting both diaspora and non-diaspora audiences. Whether or not the massacres have been recognized as genocide influences what shape and purpose the commemoration practices take on. In the case of the Rwandan or Bosnian diasporas, the acts of violence have been recognized as genocide by the international community, and therefore the commemoration acts usually consist of uniting the community and “sending solidarity messages to the compatriots” back in the homeland.²⁰ In contrast, in the case of the Tamil²¹ or currently with Kurdish²² diasporas, where the acts of violence have not received full recognition either by the perpetrators or by the larger international community (with the exception of a few states), diasporic efforts mobilize around advocacy and lobbying for recognition, and to raising awareness in the host society about the committed massacres, thus showing how communities engage in justice-seeking activities that transcend borders and continue domestic struggles for justice abroad.²³

How diaspora communities remember and commemorate traumatic events may also differ considerably from the commemoration acts of locals in the homeland. Transnational movements and the formation of diasporic communities across the globe mean that memories have also become deterritorialized. For instance, Radstone has suggested that we need to pay attention to the locatedness of such memories, claiming that memories, although travelling, are still “instantiated locally, in a specific place and at a particular time.”²⁴ In other words, diasporic memory is “place based,” but not necessarily “place bound.”²⁵ This means that

analyses on genocide memorialization need to be more sensitive to spatial dynamics and what shape memorialization processes take, for instance, in the diasporic space and why.²⁶

It is possible that diasporic articulations on genocide and its memorialization reflect the dominant homeland narratives, but they can also become autonomized and take different forms according to the host country context,²⁷ or even between different diaspora segments. For instance, Giorgio Shiani shows how the Sikh community, both at home and abroad, consider the storming of the Golden Temple complex in 1984 a “critical event”, and how it has become central to the imagination of both a Sikh nation and a Sikh diaspora in exile. Sikhs in the diaspora have used this narrative and played upon a politics of victimhood to justify their dispersion outside their homeland. As Shiani states: “Central to the construction of a discourse of ‘victimhood’ is the selective use of *memory* by nationalists: how Sikhs in the diaspora ‘remember’ ‘Operation Blue Star’ and what, more importantly, the Sikhs in the Punjab, choose to ‘forget’.” The local Sikhs’ strategy of chosen amnesia to cope with living in their homeland has greatly differed from that of diaspora Sikhs to assert their own identity as Sikhs.²⁸

In other words, genocide memorialization can move across the world, in both time and space,²⁹ and may take different shapes in the transnational diaspora space. This transnational space, in a sense, provides a means for “long-distance mourning”³⁰ that takes both material and immaterial forms through cultural production, arts, memorials, museums, and so forth. For instance, as Elisa Sandri shows in the case of Cambodia, “Artistic reflections on memory from afar may be important elements for the past and future of Cambodia, engendering alternative modes and practices of justice.”³¹ Also, Halilovich notes in his study on the Srebrenica genocide, how acts of commemoration in diaspora include artistic and religious practices that not only “bring the members of the Bosnian diaspora

together through fostering communal solidarity among themselves”, but also creates a safe space for long-distance mourning and potential healing by sharing traumatic experiences.³² He further argues that remembering the Srebrenica massacre has turned into a cohesive narrative and memory via the collective actions of the Bosnian diaspora all around the world.

Building on this previous literature, our approach in this paper is on the processual nature of remembering and memory-making, instead of taking (collective) memory as something that exists by itself. We will examine how collective remembering takes place, what diasporic articulations and representations of genocide are produced, and how references to genocide through this remembering are employed to create networks and narratives in communities.³³ In this sense, we feel that Volkan’s theory of chosen trauma can provide insights into how particular massacres are selected as the one(s) to be commemorated. He refers to chosen trauma as “a shared mental representation of a traumatic past event during which the large group suffered loss and/or experienced helplessness, shame, and humiliation in a conflict with another group.” In his words, “chosen traumas are recalled during the anniversary of the original event, and the ritualistic commemoration helps to bind the members of the large group together.”³⁴ Although his approach to chosen traumas does not specifically discuss commemoration in the diasporic space, we argue that it provides a useful tool for examining how chosen traumas can become a significant group marker of ethnic identity and cohesion. For instance, state elites and both homeland and diaspora political actors can instrumentalize such chosen traumas for political purposes and use them in nation-building processes to reactivate and reconfirm this identity through references to a shared traumatic past.

Moreover, we also argue that chosen traumas can become narrated in relation to the exiled condition and contribute to collective identity constructions in diaspora. In fact, early

definitions included exile and traumatic dispersal as criterion for transnational communities to be defined as a diaspora.³⁵ Similarly, more classical approaches have taken the existence of collective memory as a *sine qua non* for diaspora mobilization and sense of identity.³⁶ In fact, a sense of victimhood and a shared solidarity among community members as a result of displacement are considered some of the most fundamental constituents for diasporic identity. Lately, however, scholars have pointed out that modern diasporas are transforming themselves into non-state actors by defying their victimhood discourse and replacing it with agency and leverage, which may help to bring positive change to their war-torn home country.³⁷ This means that diasporic articulations and representations of genocide and chosen traumas can take on the politics of victimhood and reference the exiled condition, while simultaneously contrasting with the diaspora's agency, the community's survival, and successes in the host society.

In this sense, we feel that it is important to examine the generational dynamics of genocide memorialization. According to Volkan,³⁸ the chosen trauma changes function and becomes more than a memory over generations. Commemoration practices can actually help sustain the transmission of knowledge of the community's traumatic past on to subsequent generations. Sossie Kasbarian has demonstrated that the memory of genocide has been an essential component of Armenian diasporic identity, to the extent that "generations have grown up with their parents', grandparents', and great grandparents' personal accounts of loss, displacement, and of starting over—the memory of the genocide is transmitted intergenerationally."³⁹ Similarly, Bahar Baser has shown that second-generation Kurds in Germany and Sweden inherited conflict dynamics and traumas from their parents, as their diasporic identity has been shaped by what their parents experienced in Turkey.⁴⁰

As suggested by Thomas Lacroix and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, the issue of memory circulation needs to be addressed not only across diasporic spaces, but also across generations. However, as they further note, “the diverse ways in which children and youth ‘inherit’, contest, negotiate, transmit and mobilize specific memories have, nonetheless, infrequently been examined in diaspora studies.”⁴¹ This means that second and subsequent generations in the diaspora may view, act upon, and attach meanings to the chosen trauma differently than their parents’ generation. As mentioned earlier, the forced displacement and exile that the first generation experienced personally can be conflated with the chosen trauma. However, second-generation members’ articulations of the chosen trauma might differ, as for them it is a form of “transmitted trauma” that they have not experienced themselves. The second generation may, for instance, detach themselves from the political fragmentations of the previous generations and focus on other means of making their voice heard, be it through artistic or other forms of cultural production. For example, Sandri notes in her study on second generation Cambodian-Americans, that the transnational memory of the genocide is being “reconstructed through music, film and Khmer traditional arts, as well as other kinds of artistic productions.” She continues, “These artists use their creativity to position themselves within discourses of genocidal justice across different artistic platforms, combining American and Cambodian aesthetics to produce ‘memorials’ and to create an imagined space of justice and reconciliation.”⁴²

The Kurdish Case

History of Forced Displacement and the Anfal Campaign

In addition to significant labour migration,⁴³ the unstable political situation in the region of Kurdistan has led to the formation of Kurdish diaspora communities across Europe and North America. Armed conflict, occasionally involving international forces, has been a frequent characteristic of interethnic relations in Iraq (1961–2003), Iran (1967–1968, 1979–present), and Turkey (1984–present).⁴⁴ Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria have targeted Kurdish populations in the twentieth century with various state-led measures ranging from assimilation policies to genocidal actions. Together, these events have led to the internal and international displacement of Kurds, and to the formation of more than one million Kurdish diaspora communities around the globe,⁴⁵ out of a total population estimate of 25–40 million that is divided between Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and Iran.⁴⁶

The forced displacement of Iraqi Kurds can be traced back to the late 1980s. During the Iran-Iraq war, the Iraqi regime launched a brutal campaign against Kurdish rebels that lasted from 1986 to 1988. The Al-Anfal Campaign⁴⁷ consisted of eight military offensives that used chemical weapons to annihilate Kurdish rural life between February and September 1988.⁴⁸ During those years, under the command of Saddam Hussein, Hassan al-Majid (Saddam's cousin, also known as "Chemical Ali") organized forced deportations and systematic chemical attacks on Kurdish villages located in Northern Iraq. By the end of the Campaign, some 1.5 million Kurds had been "resettled". Altogether, the eight military offensives physically destroyed 3,000 villages, killing approximately 150,000–180,000 people, and leaving more than 180,000 missing.⁴⁹

One particular attack stands out, as it featured the single most horrific event during the Anfal Campaign. In March 1988, the Iraqi regime organized an attack on the town of Halabja. More than 5,000 people died when Iraqi warplanes dropped mustard gas and other chemical weapons in an attempt to destroy Kurdish life in Halabja and its surroundings.⁵⁰ As

Six-Hohenbalken accounts, more than 10,000 were injured as the poison gas sank quickly and affected even those hiding underground. Victims suffered loss of sight, acid burns in their eyes, burned skin, and damage to respiratory organs,⁵¹ and some continue to suffer the consequences of those attacks to this day.⁵²

Halabja has become very emblematic in the collective memory of Kurds.⁵³ For instance, besides war crimes, Saddam was additionally charged with genocide against the Kurds, specifically referencing Halabja. The prosecution had only presented half of the case before he was executed. His cousin was equally condemned to death in 2006 after being found guilty of having orchestrated the Halabja bombing. Hence, the Iraqi High Tribunal never officially found the two guilty of genocide.⁵⁴ Moreover, with the exception of commemoration events, there are no institutional steps for dealing with these kinds of past atrocities.⁵⁵

Contested Memories over the Anfal Campaign and Halabja in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Especially in cases of genocide, states draw from their traumatic past to put forward a particular narrative for political purposes⁵⁶ that, as in many other similar cases, is not free from political contestations.⁵⁷ The experience of the Anfal Campaign created a narrative of victimhood that has become a part of Kurdish collective memory and nation-building processes in the KRI.⁵⁸ After 1992, when the KRI gained its autonomy from the central government, political actors created a victim narrative in which Kurds have been subjected to systematic genocide since the foundation of Iraq.⁵⁹ Anfal, in particular, was used as a political reference to create a historical memory about the Kurdish nation, and was later instrumentalized by political actors in Iraqi Kurdistan.⁶⁰ After the US-led invasion of Iraq and

the fall of Saddam's regime in 2003, this narrative became central to the KRG's nation-building efforts. The Monument of Halabja Martyrs was built in the city that same year, and has been frequently visited by both local residents and diaspora Kurds. In 2006, the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs (MMAA) was established as part of the KRG in the de facto autonomous Kurdish region of Northern Iraq. In Moradi's words, "the MMAA embarked on turning the memory of Al-Anfal into a dominant form of national and individual self-identification as they produced it as memory of both the Kurdish nation and the homeland."⁶¹

As he further argues:

The Ministry sought not only to have al-Anfal internationally recognized as genocide but also to produce a national narrative/memory/identity at the same time. To replace al-Anfal with such a legal name (genocide) was hoped to add the Kurdish people to the list of other peoples with a history of genocide, which in turn was to help to lay foundations for a future of a Kurdish nation-state.⁶²

As Moradi notes, the remembrance of genocide takes place in certain villages, towns, or Anfal prison camps located in the region. Symbolic cemeteries have been built near memorial sites, and between March and August commemoration events are organized with the participation of the MMAA and international guests who are invited from around the world to share the suffering of the Kurds.⁶³ Moradi, drawing from Derrida,⁶⁴ calls these demonstrations of "a universal urgency of memory."⁶⁵ Especially during commemoration events in the KRI, Moradi says that TV stations seek out survivors who are sympathizers of the dominant political parties and give testimonies that are sympathetic to the Kurdish government.⁶⁶

The KRG wishes to exert control over local memorialization practices in order to sustain its hegemonic position. This is showcased, for instance, in the way images of Anfal are used during election campaigns,⁶⁷ illustrating what is chosen to be remembered and how, and what sort of narrative of the shared traumatic experience is displayed for purposes linked to Kurdish nation-building.⁶⁸ Indeed, Moradi calls these acts “political translations of Anfal,” and staged acts of remembrance.⁶⁹ Rather than being done as gesture of symbolic closure for victims, helping them come to terms with the past and move on with their lives,⁷⁰ KRG-led commemoration events aim at performing for a much wider audience, sometimes at the expense of victims. For instance, disputes surfaced in Halabja when the monument of Halabja martyrs was erected in 2003.⁷¹ It was faced with fierce criticism from citizens who criticized the KRG for trying to capitalize on the memory of the massacre, while failing to provide meaningful support to the local population.⁷² The monument ended up being destroyed by a group of protestors.

It has also been suggested that the dominant narratives of Anfal should be questioned and expanded to include women’s experiences,⁷³ and that the victims in general have been neglected by the hegemonic political discourse of “national suffering.”⁷⁴ Anfal survivors have expressed disappointment with the KRG for not pushing the central government to bring justice to the victims.⁷⁵ Furthermore, certain aspects of the massacre, including the knowledge of Kurdish groups that collaborated with the Iraqi Army, are conveniently forgotten in state narratives.⁷⁶ This is not unique to the Kurdish case. Memorialization is a tricky terrain where different actors can stake their claims with a particular political agenda. As Jinks⁷⁷ states, “memorialization can be seen as an *intervention* into memory”; it is a performance that involves statements about what should be remembered and what should be forgotten. Indeed, within the KRI, though somewhat invisible to the international community,

there are competing and conflicting memories and narratives with regards to commemorating Anfal.⁷⁸

Genocide Memorialization in the Diaspora

As a consequence of the globally dispersed and organized Kurdish diaspora, the “Kurdish issue” has become both internationalized and deterritorialized. Nevertheless, Kurdish diaspora is considered highly politically organized,⁷⁹ not the least due to the ethno-national struggle of Kurdish minorities in the sending states and the long-standing political oppression that Kurdish populations encountered to differing degrees throughout history. On the other hand, to some extent, the receiving state’s political spheres and opportunity structures have provided the means to mobilize politically and take more liberties with cultural expressions—including commemoration practices. As a result, the transnationally organized Kurdish diaspora has provided a platform for vibrant solidarity around commemoration practices in host societies, including France, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, and Finland.

Our study shows that commemorations surrounding the Anfal Campaign seem to have taken two forms in the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora. The first is the KRG-driven initiatives in the transnational space that are part of a larger political project, namely that of the Kurdish state-building project and, to some extent, a reflection of the genocide memorialization processes in the KRI. The second has been a more grassroots-level and diaspora-driven memorialization that aims to create solidarity among Iraqi Kurdish diaspora members, as well as between diasporans and locals in the homeland. Similarly, both target an inward and outward audience, meaning that both include home and host country elements. However, the driving forces behind both may vary in different host country contexts depending on the

profile of diaspora members, the influence of diaspora elites to mobilize people around such activities, and the openness of the host country to accept such events.

Via its representations in European countries, the KRG has been quite active in lobbying for the recognition of Anfal and Halabja as genocide.⁸⁰ In close cooperation with the KRG, diaspora Kurds have mobilized in different host countries to petition for the recognition of Anfal as genocide. Simultaneously, in the diaspora there has been active grassroots level mobilization towards commemorating Anfal and advocating for recognition of the Anfal Campaign as genocide. Formal recognitions of Anfal as genocide have been increasing in past years, mostly due to this sustained lobbying mechanism.

However, interviewee accounts reveal that this had not always been the case. At the end of the 1980s, even before the Kurds gained larger autonomy within Iraq, diaspora Kurds who had already left the region organized sit-ins, petitions, and protests to raise awareness of the potentiality of such massacres. They mobilized against the Saddam regime and urged European governments to act against the persecution of Kurds. A high-ranking politician who lived in exile in the Netherlands for many years stated that in the 1980s it was very hard to reach politicians and the media, and lobbying them to show attention to the Kurdish case was almost impossible.⁸¹

We became kind of lobbyists In some countries we were more organized, in some countries less. Lobbying was just about informing people because nobody knew anything about the Kurds. Especially on the situation of human rights. We tried to have an effect on media.

His narrative is particularly important because he was a well-known figure in the Kurdish movement and very active in diaspora circles before returning to the KRI to take up a political post. He belonged to the wave of asylum seekers from Iraqi Kurdistan who arrived

before the Anfal Campaign and Halabja. He talks about the impact of Anfal on the diaspora community in the following way:

When it reached Anfal, it affected many people emotionally. They saw European TV channels talking about the Kurds. People in Halabja have been massacred. In Holland, we organized a big demonstration. I met the Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time.

He recounts how the diaspora was extremely affected to see their loved ones subjected to genocidal measures under the Saddam regime. Defining this as a turning-point in Kurdish diasporic identity, he confirms that lobbying for the recognition of Kurdish plight took a more systematic approach. However, the desired attention came much later. The international community, according to him, only showed interest when they wanted to depict Saddam as the “bad guy” in the Middle East:

Halabja exposed the reality to many people. What we talked about for many years When Halabja happened, people started to listen to us. But it was also for a short time. The change came when Saddam Hussain occupied Kuwait ... Halabja became material for them to convince their people to attack Saddam as a bad person. Then we were always on TV. We started to tell the story in a different way and people started listening to us. We could go everywhere, talk, give lectures, radio, newspapers ... many of us, we were everywhere. We knocked on every door before but now they were knocking on our doors.

Another diasporan who recently returned to Kurdistan, Dlawer Ala’Aldeen, explains his experiences with lobbying during that time:

Our lobbying campaign faced stiff opposition from both the East and West. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government in the UK and Mr. Ronald Reagan's administration in the USA were simply not interested in news of the genocide, and at times even hindered our efforts. In the British Parliament not one of the 376 Tory MPs was prepared to communicate the plight of the Kurds.⁸²

As these testimonies show, diaspora activists had a hard time gathering support for their cause until the host countries perceived advocacy being in their own interest. Only then did diasporans manage to use this new wave of interest to their benefit and increase their lobbying efforts for documenting what had happened under the Iraqi regime in the 1990s. One Kurdish activist, exiled in 1996 to the Netherlands, managed to institutionalize these efforts by forming an organization to document the chemical attack and its consequences. He also established initiatives to track down and bring to justice perpetrators who fled to Europe by pressuring their host countries to capture them.⁸³ Diawer Ala'Aldeen, who returned from the UK to the KRI and now leads a think-tank in Erbil, explains the importance of diaspora activities in this regard:

Considering the circumstances, the Kurds in the diaspora community were collectively incredibly successful in obtaining robust data and solid evidence confirming the use of CWs [chemical weapons]. These data were later used by the UK and US Governments to justify the subsequent wars that liberated Kuwait (1991) and removed Saddam (2003). For example, Tony Blair's dossier (Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction) of 2002 made extensive use of the literature that the Kurds had provided in the late 1980s. Similarly, former US Secretary of State Colin Powell, emphasised in his United Nations

speech on 5 February 2003 Saddam's use of CWs against the Kurds in 1988, and mentioned Iraq's campaign of "ethnic cleansing and the destruction of some 2,000 Kurdish villages."⁸⁴

These grassroots initiatives gradually turned into larger movements, at times supported by the homeland's political actors and at times independent of them. For instance, the non-profit Center of Halabja Against Genocide and Anfalization of the Kurds (CHAK)⁸⁵ was initiated by a number of diaspora Kurds in 2001. The Center had affiliations in Kurdistan, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, and Germany, and operated on a transnational basis. One of the founders of CHAK said that the organization worked to draw international attention to the Anfal Campaign through awareness campaigns and commemoration activities.⁸⁶ Furthermore, besides pressuring the national governments, diaspora actors have also organized commemoration events at the European Parliament.

Therefore, it can be said that in time, similar to other cases such as Srebrenica commemorations, low-key diaspora gatherings turn into larger commemoration events that attract a variety of people including politicians and activists from the host society.⁸⁷ For instance, the KRG's representation in London organized a conference to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Anfal genocide, the chemical attack on Halabja, and the thirtieth anniversary of the Barzani killings on 17 January 2013. The event was supported by the Minister for the Middle East Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the UK⁸⁸ and endorsed by other European politicians, such as Fredrik Malm, Chair of the Sweden-Kurdistan Network of the Swedish Parliament. Another event called "Justice for Halabja" was organized on 10 March 2014 in the UK Parliament, marking the twenty-sixth anniversary of the chemical bombing. The occasion featured high-ranking politicians and important political figures, among them Tom Hardie-Forsyth, a former senior advisor to the KRG Prime

Minister and a former NATO Senior Committee Chairman, and Professor Michael Bohlander, a chair in Comparative and International Criminal Law at Durham University. In Sweden, commemorations usually take place at Adolf Fredrik Church and bring together Kurds from four parts of Kurdistan as well as Swedish politicians, civil society, and journalists.

[Insert Figure 1]

Figure 1. A picture of the Swedish and Kurdish flags at the commemoration of Anfal and Halabja at the Adolf Fredrik Church in Stockholm

Undoubtedly, KRG-driven genocide commemoration events have provided KRG political actors with a greater space for lobbying and transnational advocacy networking.⁸⁹ This also resonates with Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasbiyeh's observation that "... simultaneous processes of remembering and forgetting and memorializing and marginalizing are often highly political in nature, at times mobilized by the diaspora to improve their access to rights in their hosting context or in their place of origin."⁹⁰ By seeking justice and recognition for their past from host country actors, it can be said that diasporas are trying to unite the past to the present. Recognition of their plight not only legitimizes their reasons for escape in the eyes of the host society, but will also inform the host society about who the Kurds really are.

A considerable number of the participants in this study mentioned that a positive reception from their host societies was a clear sign that the KRG has these countries' support, and that they felt well-understood in terms of their suffering and the reasons behind Kurds' exiled condition. Some participants lamented that it was usually the leftist parties that showed attention to their cause despite the fact that this is not an atrocity that solely concerns the Kurds, but all humanity.⁹¹ The relationship between a host country's official recognition of a diaspora's suffering and that diaspora's feeling of belonging to the host country in return is not unique to the Kurdish case. For instance, in 2012, the Parliament of Australia adopted a

special motion, acknowledging the events of the genocide at Srebrenica in 1995. According to Halilovich, this created a special bond between the Australian host state and the Bosnian diaspora.⁹² However, the issue of Anfal recognition is highly complex and politically sensitive to some host countries. Diaspora Kurds have criticised the involvement and responsibility of their host countries (and companies operating within such countries) in setting the stage for Anfal.⁹³ Such voices were also present in our study. For instance, a diaspora member who resides in Washington, DC said the following:

We demand compensation for the families of the victims. The KRG has started this initiative. It is very important for us to get that recognition. Because it happened to us. But it is not only about Kurds. This genocide has happened to Kurds but we want to make sure that genocides never happen again. Everywhere, not only in Kurdistan. It [recognition] will bring closure to the families of the victims. The perpetrators have not yet been prosecuted. I would, personally, very much appreciate it if ICC [International Criminal Court] gets involved. Not only on Halabja, but Anfal and other massacres. It is very important. Yes, the crimes have been committed by the regime, but the regime was supported by the international community. Chemicals that were used against Halabja were received from companies in Holland and elsewhere. So, we want compensation for that. They need to be held accountable and they need to officially apologize to the Kurds. Maybe they did not know that Saddam would use this against Kurds but they should acknowledge that they should not have provided him with chemicals, especially when he was in war with Iran.⁹⁴

In line with those demands expressed by many other diaspora members in Europe, he continues:

Some perpetrators are living abroad. If the international community acknowledged this as a genocide or crime against humanity, then they have the duty to arrest these kinds of criminals and extradite them to the Iraqis or to the Kurds. The diaspora can play a huge role in this.⁹⁵

In fact, Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh discuss the “syncretic” character of memory-making processes, and argue that the memories of diaspora are not only about what the community is willing to remember, but also what the others are willing to acknowledge.⁹⁶ This observation fits particularly well with the topic of genocide memorialization and the related recognition initiatives directed at host societies, for instance in form of lobbying and petitions.⁹⁷ A lack of knowledge about the Kurdish plight also emerged as one of the most common points raised by the interviewees, who felt that if they just start with the basics that could be followed by an acknowledgement of Kurdish suffering at a later stage. As one interviewee mentions: “The diaspora can increase awareness about Kurdish history. Even in the US, my classmates who study international relations did not know about Kurdistan.”⁹⁸ Another participant also made the same point, but asserts that the main reason for the lack of knowledge about Kurds is due to the lack of a strong Kurdish lobby. With regards to Anfal, he said: “This is not a political issue. This is a human issue. I believe we should unite as Kurdish people and start a lobby. We do not have a lobby like Jewish people.”⁹⁹ Although there is a grassroots demand for recognition, the lack of a monolithic Kurdish diaspora with the same agenda and vision hinders further progress in certain cases. This means that lobbying might be successful only if it is strongly supported and pushed forward by political actors in the homeland or if diaspora entrepreneurs manage to unite fragmented diaspora groups for specific events.

As discussed earlier, commemoration of the Anfal Campaign and Halabja in the KRI is an example of how state-driven memorialization sometimes clashes with grassroots level memorialization of past massacres. However, what seems to be common for commemoration practices in the diaspora, both in KRG-related and more grassroots level practices, is that they do not generate political contestations over memorialization similar to the ones in the KRI. This is not to say that diaspora narratives on Anfal are homogeneous and without any contestation. Even in these there are discrepancies between individual experiences of genocide and the Anfal Campaign as a touchstone of collective memory.¹⁰⁰

Yet, despite the existence of intra-political party rivalries, no significant fragmentation such as the ones in the KRI have occurred over the interpretation of past events and the “instrumentalization” of Anfal between different diaspora actors,¹⁰¹ nor between the diaspora actors and the KRG. In contrast, commemoration practices have served to strengthen the bonds between diaspora members as well as between host country actors and diasporans. In the latter case, they help to keep ties to the homeland alive and intact,¹⁰² whereas in the former case, they help to create a cohesive narrative that references Anfal as the chosen trauma and is maintained through the collective actions of remembrance in the transnational diasporic space. In this sense, we can conclude that regardless of the connections between the two, genocide memorialization processes for the Anfal Campaign in the diaspora are not identical to those in the homeland. They are not only aimed at different audiences, but also stem from differing political interests and driving forces. In the case of the diaspora, the collective remembering of Anfal as the chosen trauma has contributed to a greater sense of social cohesion and belonging for the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora community. After all, diasporic living involves intimate and multiple attachments that are in many ways negotiated through the experiences of war and trauma.

From the Politics of Victimhood to Resistance and Resilience

Khalid Khayati observes that the “dominant discourse of victim diaspora” can be found in “all Kurdish political organizations and socio-cultural institutions and networks in Western societies.” He suggests that the mainstream diaspora discourse “portrays the ‘homeland orientation’ among diasporan Kurds most often in negative terms such as *azar* (trauma), *sitam* (oppression) and *qurbani* (victim).”¹⁰³ Abbas Vali also notes that oppression and denial form the discursive foundation of Kurdish nationalism.¹⁰⁴ Considering the history, it is not surprising that denial and oppression are central narratives of Kurdish collective identity/ies when states’ minority relations in Kurdish-speaking regions have varied from diverse assimilation policies to genocidal measures.

The narratives of chosen trauma, namely of Anfal and Halabja, have become an integral component of how Iraqi Kurdish actors formulate collective identity narratives, not only in the KRI but also in the diasporic space. Commemoration practices showcase how certain chosen traumas are referenced and used as part of identity narratives. Social practices as well as tangible memorials, such as museums and monuments, make explicit reference to this link between identity and collective remembering. For instance, scholars have shown that genocide memorialization often plays out in the physical spaces of formal memorials, monuments, museums, and ceremonies¹⁰⁵ that seek to reference and raise the visibility of past massacres. One example of this is the memorial dedicated to the victims of Halabja that opened in The Hague in 2014 and includes a statue based on an iconic photograph called “Silent Witness,” taken right after the attack by Turkish photojournalist Ramazan Öztürk. Similar to the homeland context, Halabja has come to occupy a central place in the collective memory of the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora. This is also the case with commemoration practices

for the Anfal Campaign. For instance, in 2012, several diaspora organizations (The Confederation of Kurdish Association in Europe (KONKURD), CHAK, Kurdocide Watch, and Kurdistan National Congress) organized a conference entitled “The Halabja Genocide and Anfal Campaigns.”¹⁰⁶ Another example is a three-day photography exhibition that opened in the European Parliament in 2013 and focused on the Halabja massacre.¹⁰⁷ We can say that, whereas the Anfal Campaign has become the chosen trauma for the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora, given that Halabja stands out as the single most horrific event of this campaign, it serves as an emblematic event and is a primary focus in both material and immaterial forms of genocide memorialization concerning the Anfal Campaign.

In some cases, the chosen traumas that form the focal point of genocide commemoration practices can lead to mass migration from the home region, and to the formation of an exiled community in diaspora. Members of the diaspora community may not only have first-hand experience the chosen trauma, but also of its consequences in the form of more or less permanent spatial displacement. In turn, the chosen trauma can be narrated in relation to the exiled condition, thereby providing legitimization for leaving the homeland.¹⁰⁸ Based on our material, the Kurdish case resembles Anderson Paul’s observations on the Armenian-America diaspora. He suggests that “genocidal memory” provides a cohesive group ideology and identity for Armenians in the diaspora,¹⁰⁹ as collective experiences of trauma and exile become essential components in collective identity narratives in the diasporic space. For instance, Catic observes in her study on Circassian genocide that “the genocide recognition initiative is an identity-driven project, resulting from a fear of extinction that grows out of the experience of being a vulnerable ethno-national group, living with memories of deportations, exile and fragmentation.”¹¹⁰ This is also the case with the genocide memorialization concerning the Anfal Campaign. The genocide memorialization processes

for Anfal as the chosen trauma provide a platform to construct and circulate identity narratives that are rooted in feelings of denial, injustice, and victimhood.

However, these diasporic articulations of identity and of Anfal do not merely reference the politics of victimhood, but also include narratives of resistance and resilience, as is illustrated by one interviewee in his account on Kurds:

Kurds in diaspora and people who are exiled, they succeed in life. It becomes a self-defence mechanism. Kurds, from the beginning of their history, have never been displaced. Then the invaders became neighbours, took our lands We have been massacred several times, in the Gulf war, during Anfal, but don't think that we are miserabilist in these situations. There's a form of resistance that is a form of existence for us. It is in our blood; since we were young we fought for our homeland, and never left to invade others. That resistance is a form of existence, a political claim, and a cultural one too.¹¹¹

The narrative of resistance and agency that is present throughout the interview material is also visible in the cultural production that touches on Anfal. Although cultural production is one way to create visibility for Anfal,¹¹² Dundar notes that the Anfal Campaign has not been of great interest to Western and Middle Eastern film producers, and the events have “not found their due place in literary and cultural history.”¹¹³ It needs to be acknowledged, however, that there is a rich literature regarding the Anfal and Halabja in Kurdish-language poetry and narrative discourse.¹¹⁴ Films on Anfal have been primarily produced and directed by diaspora Kurds and are examples of raising awareness about the past massacres and raising questions of representation, while also offering a means for memorialization. It should also be mentioned that not only diaspora Kurds from Iraq, but Kurds from different parts of

the Kurdistan region, show interest in cultural and artistic productions on this issue, which is a significant indicator of how Anfal and Halabja are emblematic events for Kurds outside Iraq. For instance, the films *Memories on Stone*, by Iraqi-born director Shawkat Amin Korki, and *Turtles Can Fly*, by the Iranian-born director Bahman Ghobadi, document and share what happened during the Anfal Campaign with a larger audience, including non-diaspora.¹¹⁵ Both directors, as well as the producer of the latter movie, Turkish-born Mehmet Aktas, are diaspora Kurds living in exile. Dunder analyses the famous Kurdish director's *Turtles Can Fly*, and suggests that Ghobadi "makes an ethical call to his viewers to bear witness to the Kurdish Genocide and invites them to reverse their expectations of an image of a victimized child."¹¹⁶ He proposes that Ghobadi's production provides an alternative narrative to the one that presents Kurds as mere victims of genocide. Instead, cultural representations of Anfal include transforming the narrative away from the experience of victimhood and towards resilience and resistance. This is also congruent with the findings of our study: the diaspora victimhood narrative is complemented, if not replaced, by the narrative of resistance and resilience, visible in diasporic articulations on Anfal. The victims of the chosen trauma have become the survivors of it.

From Exilic to Diasporic Memory

During and immediately after the Anfal Campaign, many Kurds who were already in diaspora communities in Europe organized protests including marches, petitions, hunger strikes, and the occupation of embassies. Although members of the so-called first generation (i.e. migrants who arrived in their host country as adults) are the primary participants in commemoration events, subsequent generations can also play a role in genocide memorialization. Several diaspora Kurds from the first generation have dedicated their lives

to this cause and brought up their children with the memory of Anfal. In fact, second generation interviewees born and raised in Europe talked about their wish to pass on the memory of Anfal and the traumatic history of the Kurdish nation to subsequent generations. This is highlighted in the account of a Kurdish interviewee, who was a young child when she left the KRI with her parents in the early 1990s:

I really want my children to know what I have experienced and what my parents and grandparents have experienced, and how our nation has suffered. And that they should appreciate that, after so many different stages, we are in this situation in diaspora while thousands of Kurds have been killed for nothing.¹¹⁷

Lyons suggests that,

... the trauma of violent displacement is vivid in the first generation's minds and is often kept alive in subsequent generations through commemoration and symbols. In fact, one function of conflict-generated diaspora network is to make sure that the displacement's original cause is remembered and the grievance passed on to the next generation.¹¹⁸

Diaspora communities attempt to ensure the conveyance of cultural and religious codes, language, and a sense of belonging to subsequent generations, which can be further accentuated due to the continued state of exile. Such initiatives focus mostly on identity formation and the transmission of knowledge of past events that led to the exiled condition. Also, in some cases, these diasporic synergies might be used to foster advocacy for transnational justice-seeking efforts.

For instance, second generation Kurds in Finland organized a biking trip from Turku to Helsinki some years ago, in order to submit a petition to Parliament House demanding that the Anfal bombings be declared genocide:

We had this commemoration event in March, for the genocide of Kurds committed by Saddam. We rode from Turku to Helsinki with bikes and gave a petition to the representative of human rights at the Parliament house. They came to the stairs to talk with us about it. So you can use different ways to raise awareness. We actually made a biking association out of it to encourage young people to ride bikes instead of driving cars. It's good for the climate too.

Later on, the members of the association organized a similar trip in Iraqi Kurdistan and visited the memorial site of Halabja by bicycle.¹¹⁹ Another example that included second-generation members is a photography exhibition organized by KRG representation in Paris. The KRG representation bureau created a brochure to commemorate Anfal and Halabja that showcased first and second-generation members who live in France. The second-generation were wearing the uniforms of their new jobs in France with the aim of showing that they survived and were now part of French society after a successful integration period. During the interview, Akil Marceau, former director of the Paris bureau,¹²⁰ mentioned that they did not want to focus solely on victimhood, but wanted to show how Kurds survived a genocide and continue to be successful in their new lives in their host countries.

Subsequent generations, however, do not necessarily have a similar take on the chosen traumas compared to their parents. Second-generation members often have no firsthand experience of the massacres that are at the heart of genocide memorialization: the second generation lacks the concrete experiences of their homeland's decisive past. In this

sense, Marianne Hirsch's work on postmemory can help explain the relationship the second generation has to the first generation's chosen trauma in diaspora communities. She defines postmemory as "a *structure* of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience."¹²¹ In other words, it is the relationship between those who have not experienced the trauma themselves and the events that have been transmitted to them, thereby constituting memories in their own right. This means that the memory of massacres is not only being transmitted, but also reconstructed and reinterpreted by subsequent generations in the diasporic space.

Jowan Mahmud takes up the concept of postmemory when discussing genocide memorialization in her study on Kurdish diaspora communities online. She states that "it shows the production of a history through memories that are mediated through different means and which have proved to be an important subject in retaining the Kurdish identity and also in spreading the knowledge in the country and worldwide."¹²² This production of history through memories is perhaps most obvious in the ways in which it is imaginative. Hirsch aptly observes that without the lived experience, the connection to the past among the second generation is "imaginative investment, projection, and creation."¹²³ Our material shows that second-generation members resorted to creative ways of attracting attention in their host societies. For instance, the Kurdish Youth Association of Canada (KYAC) organized a concert in Ottawa in 2015 to commemorate the atrocities.¹²⁴ In the UK, Kurdish diaspora artists commemorated through theatrical performances, while diaspora youth in Sweden distributed apples to people and explained what this fruit actually symbolizes for the Kurds.¹²⁵

Based on this study's findings, we suggest that while Anfal constitutes a chosen trauma for both first and second generation members of the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora, but it

functions to some extent differently in terms of memory. The frame of reference for the first-generation's genocide memorialization in the Kurdish diaspora mainly draws from the lived experiences of displacement and exile from the homeland and the narratives of victimhood, although gradually changing to narratives of resistance and resilience. In this sense, their *raison d'être* is rooted in events prior to the exile, in what Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh call the "exilic memory", which is then employed to maintain a cohesive sense of belonging in the diaspora. The second generation's approach to genocide memorialization draws from what Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh call "diasporic memory", in the sense that it is "not structured by a narration of the point of origin per se," but rather "supportive of a sense of distinctiveness towards both host and sending societies."¹²⁶ In other words, the second generation seems to be turning chosen traumas into a different kind of identity project with more artistic, creative, and at times even more politically neutral forms that do not centre around the narrative of victimhood and the exiled condition. Instead, the chosen traumas have become a postmemory for them.

Conclusion

Examining how diaspora communities engage in genocide memorialization processes sheds light on how the politics of memories and identity play out in the diasporic context. Certain massacres and genocides are constructed as the chosen trauma and occupy a central role in commemoration practices, as is the case for Armenian and Jewish diasporas, and genocide memorialization takes on different forms and meanings in the homeland and in the diaspora. The lived experience of forced displacement following the existential threat to a community offers diaspora members a sense of belonging through the sharing of a particular trauma and its immediate consequence, the exile. In the process, it can become a component

of collective identity narrative. Moreover, although the memories of chosen traumas are shared with subsequent generations, without first-hand experiences of the homeland's decisive past, the massacres come to constitute memories in their own right. This means that, differently from their parents, the memories of massacres can be reconstructed and reinterpreted by subsequent generations in diasporic space.

In this paper, we have argued that an analysis of the spatial and generational dynamics of genocide memorialization surrounding chosen traumas provides a better understanding of how the politics of memories and identity play out in the diasporic context. To this effect, we have discussed genocide memorialization in the context of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe. We specifically focused on genocide memorialization of the Anfal Campaign (1986–1989) that was orchestrated by Saddam's regime against the Kurdish population in Northern Iraq. Commemorations of Anfal have become central to the Kurdish nation-building project in the KRI and a touchstone in Kurdish collective memory. Examining how collective remembering for Anfal has taken place in the diasporic space and what diasporic articulations and representations of Anfal as the chosen trauma have been produced in commemoration practices has enabled us to discern how genocide memorialization processes in the diaspora differ from those in the homeland context.

Our study shows that Anfal as the chosen trauma has become central to Iraqi Kurdish identity in diaspora, but that the tensions surrounding genocide memorialization in the KRI are not fully diffused to the diaspora. Instead, diasporic commemoration practices usually revolve around recognition and performances of cohesion, unity, and acts of solidarity in the face of experienced victimhood and injustice. Furthermore, the exile resulting from these campaigns lies at the heart of the foundation of the Iraqi Kurdish diaspora in Europe, and has become associated with the exiled condition and the narrative of victimhood. Over time,

however, the central narrative on Anfal is gradually changing, if not being replaced, by one of resistance and resilience where the victims of the chosen trauma have become the survivors of it. Also, whereas the first-generation members' articulations of Anfal draw from the lived experience of exile, victimhood, and oppression, for the second generation the chosen trauma has become a postmemory. In other words, there is a shift from exilic memory to diasporic memory, visible in diaspora members' articulations on Anfal. This raises a question about the *longue durée* evolution, existence, and identity of diasporas, and to what extent they are predicated on memory over territory.

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Notes

¹ Both authors contributed equally to this publication.

² Anfal refers to “the spoils of war” and has its origin in one of the suras.

³ Choman Hardi, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide: Anfal Survivors in Kurdistan-Iraq* (London: Routledge, 2016); Karin Mlodoach, “Fragmented Memory, Competing Narratives: The Perspective of Women Survivors of the Anfal Operations in Iraqi Kurdistan,” in *Writing the Modern History of Iraq: Historiographical and Political Challenges*, ed. Jordi Tejel et al. (London: World Scientific Publishing, 2012), 207–208.

⁴ Jordi Tejel, “The Potential of History Textbooks and Curriculum Reform in Iraqi Kurdistan within a Conflict Transformation Frame: Dealing with the Past from a Processual and Dynamic Perspective,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38,14 (2015): 2569–2583. See also: Andrea Fischer-Tahir, “Gendered Memories and Masculinities: Kurdish Peshmerga on the Anfal Campaign in Iraq,” *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 8,1 (2012): 92–114. Andrea Fischer-Tahir, “Searching for Sense: The Concept of Genocide as Part of Knowledge

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⁵ Fazil Moradi, “Genocide in Translation: On Memory, Remembrance, and Politics of the Future,” in *Memory and Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation*, ed. Fazil Moradi, Ralph Buchenhorst, and Maria Six-Hohenbalken (New York: Routledge, 2017), 57–74.

⁶ Citation from William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1,1 (1991): 83–99. See also Thomas Lacroix and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “Refugee and Diaspora Memories: The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting,” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 24,6 (2013): 684–696; Marie-Aude Baronian, Stephan Besser, and Yolande Jansen, *Diaspora and Memory. Figures of Displacement in Contemporary Literature, Arts and Politics* (Trodopi: Brill, 2016).

⁷ Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space and Identity* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2000); Baronian, Besser, and Jansen, *Diaspora and Memory*.

⁸ Mlodoch, “Fragmented Memory,” 207–208.

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¹⁰ Alejandra Serpente, “Diasporic Constellations: The Chilean Exile Diaspora Space as a Multidirectional Landscape of Memory,” *Memory Studies* 8,1 (2015): 49–61.

¹¹ The motivations to return and what significance, for instance, citizenship in an EU country has for diaspora returnees is discussed in detail by Baser and Toivanen (2018). Bahar Baser and Mari Toivanen, “Diasporic Homecomings to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Pre- and Post-Return Experiences Shaping Motivations to Re-Return,” *Ethnicities* (Onlinefirst, 2018). See also: Hazel Smith and Paul Stares, ed., *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace-Makers or Peace-Wreckers?* (Tokyo: United Nations UP, 2007); Jeffrey T. Checkel, ed., *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013).

¹² Paul R. Anderson, “Grassroots Mobilization and Diaspora Politics: Armenian Interest Groups and the Role of Collective Memory,” *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics* 6,1 (2000): 24–47.

¹³ Bahar Baser and Mari Toivanen, “The Politics of Genocide Recognition: Kurdish Nation-Building and Commemoration in the Post-Saddam Era,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 19,3 (2017): 1–23.

¹⁴ Mlodoch, “Fragmented Memory,” 219.

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Coventry University in 2016. The first author's research was funded by the Academy of Finland (project 287667).

¹⁶ The distinction between the homeland elite and diaspora is not clear-cut. The homeland elite includes diaspora returnees, and homeland political actors operate in the diaspora as well, for instance through KRG Bureaus of Representation.

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¹⁸ Susanne Buckley-Zistel, "Remembering to Forget: Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for Local Coexistence in Post-Genocide Rwanda," *Africa* 76,2 (2006): 131–150.

¹⁹ Francois Adriaan Wolvaardt, "Genocide, Diasporic Identity and Activism: The Narratives, Identity and Activism of Armenian-Australians and Turkish-Australians Regarding the Recognition of the Deaths of Armenians during the First World War as Genocide" (PhD diss., University of Western Australia, 2013); Khalid Khayati, "From Victim Diaspora to Transborder Citizenship. Diaspora Formation and Transnational Relations Among Kurds in France and Sweden" (PhD diss., Linköping University, 2008); Bahar Baser, "La diaspora kurde d'Irak au Royaume-Uni," *Hommes et migrations* 1307 (2014): 140–143; Maja Catic, "Circassians and the Politics of Genocide Recognition," *Europe-Asia Studies* 67,10 (2015): 1685–1708; Anderson, "Grassroots Mobilization and Diaspora Politics," 24–47.

²⁰ Hariz Halilovich, "Long-Distance Mourning and Synchronised Memories in a Global Context: Commemorating Srebrenica in Diaspora," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 35,3 (2015): 410–422.

²¹ Camilla Orjuela, "Mobilising Diasporas for Justice. Opportunity Structures and the Presencing of a Violent Past," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44,8 (2018): 1357.

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²³ Orjuela, "Mobilising Diasporas for Justice," 1357–1373.

²⁴ Susannah Radstone, "What Place Is This? Transcultural Memory and the Locations of Memory Studies," *Parallax* 17,4 (2011): 117.

²⁵ Fortier, *Migrant Belongings*.

²⁶ Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, "Refugee and Diaspora Memories."

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²⁸ Giorgio Shani, "The Memorialization of Ghallughara: Trauma, Nation and Diaspora," *Sikh Formations* 6,2 (2010): 177.

²⁹ Halilovich, "Long-Distance Mourning," 412.

³⁰ Halilovich, "Long-Distance Mourning," 410–422.

³¹ Elisa Sandri, "Remembering Genocide in the Cambodian Diaspora," *A Sussex University Anthropology Blog*, November 7, 2016.

³² Halilovich, "Long-Distance Mourning."

³³ Leichter develops an account of collective memory based on Paul Ricoeur's conception of narrative identity. He suggests an approach that mediates between the opposing views that, on the one hand, collective memory is merely an aggregate of individual's memories, and, on the other hand, that it consists merely of collective representations operating distinct of individuals. Instead, he argues that "while memory properly understood belongs to, in each case, to individuals, his or her memory occurs as a dialogue with others to make sense of a shared past" (114). David J. Leichter, "Collective Identity and Collective Memory in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur," *Ricoeur Studies* 3,1 (2012): 114–131.

³⁴ Volkan, "Transgenerational Transmissions," 87.

³⁵ Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003).

³⁶ Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies," 83–99.

³⁷ Nicholas Van Hear and Robin Cohen, "Diasporas and Conflict: Distance, Contiguity and Spheres of Engagement," *Oxford Development Studies* 45,2 (2017): 171–184. This multilocality of justice-seeking efforts shows that transitional justice efforts in post-conflict societies have become globalized and deterritorialized via migration flows. See Orjuela, "Mobilising Diasporas for Justice," 2.

³⁸ Volkan, "Transgenerational Transmissions," 88.

³⁹ Sossie Kasbarian, "The Politics of Memory and Commemoration: Armenian Diasporic Reflections on 2015," *Nationalities Papers* 46,1 (2018): 126.

⁴⁰ Bahar Baser, *Diasporas and Homeland Conflicts: A Comparative Perspective* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2015).

⁴¹ Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, "Refugee and Diaspora Memories," 691.

⁴² Sandri, "Remembering Genocide."

⁴³ This was namely from Turkey to Germany, but also to other host societies.

⁴⁴ Amir Hassanpour and Shahrzad Mojab, "Kurdish Diaspora," in *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Part I. Immigrant and Refugee Cultures around the World*, ed. Melvin Ember, Carol R. Ember, and Ian Skoggard (New York: Springer, 2005), 214–224.

⁴⁵ Various estimates of the Kurdish population in Europe put the number of Kurdish-speakers between roughly 850,000 and 1.3 million, with the great majority of Kurds being from Turkey and residing in Germany (Institut kurde de Paris).

⁴⁶ Hassanpour and Mojab, "Kurdish Diaspora," 214–224.

⁴⁷ See the official definition by the Kurdistan Regional Government: "The term al-Anfal is the name given to a succession of attacks against the Kurdish population in Iraq during a specific period. These attacks were named 'al-Anfal' by Saddam Hussein and his

cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid (known as ‘Chemical Ali’), who used this term to describe the carefully planned and orchestrated eight-staged genocidal campaign between February 23rd and September 6th 1988. In Kurdish society, the word Anfal has come to represent the entire genocide over decades.” <https://us.gov.krd/en/issues/anfal-campaign-and-kurdish-genocide/>.

⁴⁸ Hardi, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide*, 13.

⁴⁹ Middle East Watch, *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign against the Kurds* (New York: Middle East Watch, 1993). David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurd* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1996) 359.

⁵⁰ Tejel, “The Potential of History Textbooks,” 2574.

⁵¹ Maria Six-Hohenbalken, “Remembering the Poison Gas Attack on Halabja: Questions of Representations in the Emergence of Memory on Genocide,” in *Memory and Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation*, ed. Fazil Moradi, Ralph Buchenhorst and Maria Six-Hohenbalken (New York: Routledge, 2017), 76.

⁵² Michael Kelly, *Ghosts of Halabja: Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish Genocide*, (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008).

⁵³ See Martin van Bruinessen’s discussion on genocide commemoration concerning the Dersim massacres (1937–1938). Martin van Bruinessen, “Genocide in Kurdistan? The Suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in Turkey (1937–38) and the Chemical War against the Iraqi Kurds (1988),” in *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions*, ed. George J. Andreopoulos (Pennsylvania: U of Pennsylvania P, 1997), 141–170.

⁵⁴ See the details of the trial here at “Timeline: Anfal Trial,” *BBC News*, 24 June 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/5272224.stm

⁵⁵ Mlodoč, “Fragmented Memory,” 206.

⁵⁶ Rebecca Jinks, “Thinking Comparatively about Genocide Memorialization,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 16,4 (2014): 423–440.

⁵⁷ As Brants and Klep put it: “They [history-telling and the formation of collective memory] are dynamic processes grounded in social, cultural and power relations in (international) society at any given time; they are coloured by the moment at which the past is considered, and by how a preferred narrative is promoted.” Chrisje Brants and Katrien Klep, “Transitional Justice: History-Telling, Collective Memory, and the Victim-Witness,” *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 7,1 (2013): 38.

⁵⁸ Tejel, “The Potential of History Textbooks.”

⁵⁹ Tejel, “The Potential of History Textbooks,” 2577.

⁶⁰ Baser and Toivanen (2017) discuss in more detail genocide recognition politics concerning the Anfal Campaign in relation to secession, nation-building, and commemoration in the KRI. The authors also briefly discuss the internationalization and instrumentalization of such politics via Kurdish diaspora in Europe.

⁶¹ Moradi, “Genocide in Translation,” 59.

⁶² Moradi, 60.

⁶³ Anniversary dates listed by the Kurdistan Regional Government are the following: 16 March is Halabja Day, a commemoration of the chemical bombing of the town of Halabja in 1988; 14 April is the Commemoration of Anfal genocide against the Kurds in 1988; 10 July is the commemoration of the 40,000 displaced civilians from Kirkuk and the Kirkuk districts in 1962; 31 July is the remembrance of the Barzani disappearance in 1983; 18 August is the remembrance of the mass killing in Surria village in 1969; and 4 September is the remembrance of the mass killing of Fayli Kurds in 1980. For a more extended list of dates concerning the chemical bombardment of other towns and villages that took place across Kurdistan in hundreds of communities, in 1984, 1987 and 1988, see the official KRG website. "Anfal Campaign and Kurdish Genocide," Kurdistan Regional Government – Representation in the United States, 2018, <https://us.gov.krd/en/issues/anfal-campaign-and-kurdish-genocide/>.

⁶⁴ Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 2001), 28.

⁶⁵ Moradi, "Genocide in Translation," 57.

⁶⁶ Ibid. Or as Six-Hohenbalken puts it: "those who dare to raise questions are accused of harming the Kurdish cause." Six-Hohenbalken, "Remembering the Poison Gas Attack on Halabja," 83.

⁶⁷ Choman Hardi, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide: Anfal Survivors in Kurdistan-Iraq* (London: Routledge, 2016), 7.

⁶⁸ Baser and Toivanen, "The Politics of Genocide Recognition."

⁶⁹ Moradi, "Genocide in Translation," 58.

⁷⁰ Mlodoč, "Fragmented Memory," 209.

⁷¹ Nicole F. Watts, "The Role of Symbolic Capital in Protest: State–Society Relations and the Destruction of the Halabja Martyrs' Monument in the Kurdish Region of Iraq," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 32,1 (2012): 14.

⁷² As Hardi asserts "it is important to acknowledge the pain of Anfal, and the betrayals and false promises that followed in order to take steps towards healing for the survivors and for the community as a whole." Hardi, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide*, 7.

⁷³ Hardi, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide*; Karin Mlodoč, "'We Want to be Remembered as Strong Women, Not as Shepherds': Women Anfal Survivors in Kurdistan-Iraq Struggling for Agency and Acknowledgment," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 8,1 (2012): 63–91.

⁷⁴ Tejel, "The Potential of History Textbooks," 2577.

⁷⁵ Hardi, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide*, 7. However, we should also underline that the KRG keeps making calls to the Iraqi central government for compensations for the victims. See also: "KRG Calls on Baghdad to Take 'Practical Steps' to Compensate Anfal

Victims' Families," *Kurdistan24*, 14 April 2018, <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/5e85e2f3-c08e-4fb3-97c1-8aa0535275c4>.

⁷⁶ Moradi, "Genocide in Translation," 57.

⁷⁷ Jinks, "Thinking Comparatively about Genocide Memorialization," 434.

⁷⁸ Mlodoch, "Fragmented Memory," 205.

⁷⁹ Östen Wahlbeck, *Kurdish Diasporas: A Comparative Study of Kurdish Refugee Communities* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999).

⁸⁰ Baser and Toivanen "The Politics of Genocide Recognition." In Britain, the KRG office has been working closely with the All-Parliamentary Group (APPG) towards the international recognition of the Kurdish genocide. As a result, the British Parliament took a vote to formally recognise Halabja as genocide in 2013. The Norwegian and Swedish parliaments formally recognized the chemical attack on Halabja as genocide in 2012.

⁸¹ Bahar Baser's interview with a Kurdish politician who lived in exile in the Netherlands, Erbil, April 2013.

⁸² See Dlawer Ala'Aldeen's own account: "Realpolitik and Disastrous Consequences: 10 Years on from Iraq, 25 from Iraq's Genocide against the Kurds," *Opendemocracy*, 15 March 2013, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/dlawer-alaaldeen/realpolitik-and-disastrous-consequences-10-years-on-from-iraq-25-from->.

⁸³ Ali Siyasi (pseudonym), interview by Bahar Baser, Erbil, April 2013.

⁸⁴ See Dlawer Ala'Aldeen, "Realpolitik and Disastrous Consequences."

⁸⁵ The Centre of Halabja Against Genocide and Anfalization of the Kurds, <http://www.ipb.org/members/the-centre-of-halabja-against-genocide-and-anfalization-of-the-kurds/>.

⁸⁶ Siyasi, interview.

⁸⁷ Halilovich, "Long-Distance Mourning," 420.

⁸⁸ Other examples of the Foreign Office's press releases on the commemoration of Anfal can be found here: "Foreign Office statement on Anfal Memorial Day," 14 April 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-office-statement-on-anfal-memorial-day>, and "Foreign Office minister comments on Anfal Memorial Day," 14 April 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-office-minister-comments-on-anfal-memorial-day--2>.

⁸⁹ Baser and Toivanen "The Politics of Genocide Recognition."

⁹⁰ Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, "Refugee and Diaspora Memories," 685.

⁹¹ Siyasi, interview.

⁹² Halilovich, "Long-Distance Mourning," 412.

⁹³ Baser and Toivanen, "The Politics of Genocide Recognition."

⁹⁴ Bahar Baser's interview with a diaspora member who lives in the USA. The interview, however, was conducted in Erbil, April 2013.

⁹⁵ Bahar Baser's interview with a diaspora member who lives in the USA. The interview, however, was conducted in Erbil, April 2013.

⁹⁶ Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, "Refugee and Diaspora Memories," 692.

⁹⁷ Baser and Toivanen "The Politics of Genocide Recognition."

⁹⁸ Bahar Baser's interview with a diaspora member who lives in the USA. The interview, however, was conducted in Erbil, April 2013.

⁹⁹ The head of the Kurdish Businessmen Association in the Netherlands, interview by Bahar Baser, Amsterdam, September 2013.

¹⁰⁰ For instance, Six-Hohenbalken documents the experiences of two Halabja massacre survivors in Vienna who express criticism towards how Halabja and Anfal are remembered in the diaspora. "Both are very dissatisfied with the role of representation ascribed to them in the diasporic realm. Various incidents have made them critical and cautious regarding representation in public. When asked to give testimonies at some commemorative events, they questioned expectations, their ascribed roles, and the space given to them- namely to speak as passive victims and not as survivors with agency and a desire to raise critical questions." Six-Hohenbalken, "Remembering the Poison Gas Attack on Halabja," 80.

¹⁰¹ For example, in the case of Rwanda there is a struggle over narratives from different sides that spill over to the transnational space and impact the relationship between Hutus and Tutsis in the diaspora. Orjuela, "Mobilising Diasporas for Justice," 2.

¹⁰² Halilovich, "Long-Distance Mourning," 420.

¹⁰³ Khayati, "From Victim Diaspora to Transborder Citizenship," 3.

¹⁰⁴ Ababs Vali, "The Kurds and Their 'Others': Fragmented Identity and Fragmented Politics," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle-East* XVIII,2 (1998): 82–95.

¹⁰⁵ Elly Harrowell, "From Monuments to Mahallas: Contrasting Memories in the Urban Landscape of Osh, Kyrgyzstan," *Social & Cultural Geography* 16,2 (2015): 203–225; Hamzah Muzaini and Brenda S.A. Yeoh, *Contested Memoryscapes. The Politics of Second World War Commemoration in Singapore* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016); Jinks, "Thinking Comparatively about Genocide Memorialization."

¹⁰⁶ "The Kurdish Genocide—Achieving Justice through EU Recognition," http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/d-iq/dv/03_kurdishgenocidesofanfalandhalabja_/03_kurdishgenocidesofanfalandhalabja_en.pdf

¹⁰⁷ "MEPs remember Halabja chemical attack at exhibition in European Parliament," *KRG Cabinet*, 28 March 2013, <http://cabinet.gov.krd/a/d.aspx?l=12&a=47051>.

¹⁰⁸ Khayati, "From Victim Diaspora to Transborder Citizenship," 3.

¹⁰⁹ Anderson, "Grassroots Mobilization and Diaspora Politics," 28.

¹¹⁰ Catic, "Circassians and the Politics of Genocide Recognition," 1686.

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- ¹¹¹ Mari Toivanen's interview with a diaspora Kurd, France, 24 April 2016.
- ¹¹² Edith Szanto, "Mourning Halabja on Screen: Or Reading Kurdish Politics through Anfal Films," *Review of Middle East Studies* 52,1 (2018): 135–146.
- ¹¹³ Eda Debedas Dunder, "Adults in Children's Bodies: Disabling Children in Bahman Ghobadi's Films," in *The History of Genocide in Cinema: Atrocities on Screen*, ed. Jonathan Friedman and William Hewitt (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016).
- ¹¹⁴ See for instance Özlem Belcim Galip, *Imagining Kurdistan: Identity, Culture and Society* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015); Nerys Williams, *Contemporary Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011); Benjamin Morris, "Choman Hardi Interview," *Textualities*, 1 September 2018, <https://www.poetryarchive.org/interview/choman-hardi-interview>.
- ¹¹⁵ In 2014, the London Kurdish Film Festival premiered the award-winning documentary, *1001 apples*, with a discussion event on the representation of genocide in Kurdish art and cinema.
- ¹¹⁶ Dunder, "Adults in Children's Bodies," 257.
- ¹¹⁷ Mari Toivanen's interview with a second-generation diaspora Kurd, Finland.
- ¹¹⁸ Terrence Lyons, "Conflict-Generated Diasporas and Transnational Politics in Ethiopia: Analysis," *Conflict, Security & Development* 7,4 (2007): 529–549.
- ¹¹⁹ Mari Toivanen, "Political Transnationalism as a Matter of Belonging: Young Kurds in Finland," in *Dislocations of Civic Cultural Borderlines: Methodological Nationalism, Transnational Reality and Cosmopolitan Dreams*, ed. Pirkkoliisa Ahponen et al. (London: Springer 2016), 87–106.
- ¹²⁰ Akil Marceau (former director of the Representation of the Regional Government of Iraqi Kurdistan), interview by Bahar Baser, Paris, November 2013.
- ¹²¹ Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29,1 (2008): 106.
- ¹²² Jowan Mahmod, *Kurdish Diaspora Online: From Imagined Community to Managing Communities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 99.
- ¹²³ Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," 107.
- ¹²⁴ "Kurdish Youth Association of Canada (KYAC) Remembers Halabja and Anfal Genocide against Kurds," Kurdish Youth Association, 18 March 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4JgxtL0SxSs>. See also "Ottawa Kurds remember Halabja," *Rudaw*, 20 March 2015, <http://www.rudaw.net/english/world/20032015>.
- ¹²⁵ Survivor accounts from Halabja revealed that the poisonous gas smelled like sweet apples. See Bahar Baser, "Haunted by the Smell of Apples. 28 Years on, Kurds Weep Over Halabja Massacre," *Conversation*, 17 March 2016, <http://theconversation.com/haunted-by-the-smell-of-apples-28-years-on-kurds-weep-over-halabja-massacre-55979>.
- ¹²⁶ Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, "Refugee and Diaspora Memories," 687–688.